Amendments to the claims:

Please replace all prior versions and listings of the claims with the following amended claims:

1.   (currently amended) A computer-implemented method for facilitating transactions in a wide area network, comprising:

   providing information relating to a transaction between a first party and a second party to a third party via the wide area network, the information including a first bid price associated with the first party and a first ask price associated with the second party; and

   enabling the third party to dynamically facilitate consummation of the transaction between the first and second parties by transmitting a counteroffer or an acceptance from the third party via the wide area network after receiving the first bid price and the first ask price, and enabling the third party to cover at least part of a first difference between the first bid price and the first ask price,

   wherein the wide area network is configured to allow any interested entity to participate in the transaction as the third party.

2.   (canceled)

3.   (canceled)

4.   (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the second party of the counteroffer transmitted to the first party via the wide area network.

5.   (canceled)

6.   (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the second party of the acceptance transmitted to the first party via the wide area network.

7.   (original) The method of claim 1 wherein providing the information comprises transmitting a web page to the third party via the wide area network, an entry in the web page corresponding to the transaction between the first and second parties.

1   8.   (original) The method of claim 7 wherein enabling the third party to facilitate
2   consummation of the transaction comprises providing at least one active object in the web page
3   associated with the entry.

1   9.   (previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the at least one active object
2   comprises an acceptance button, activation of the acceptance button resulting in transmission of
3   the acceptance to the first party via the wide area network.

1   10.   (previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the at least one active object
2   comprises a counteroffer button, activation of the counteroffer button resulting in transmission of
3   the counteroffer to the first party via the wide area network.

1   11.   (original) The method of claim 1 wherein providing the information comprises filtering
2   current system bids according to at least one criterion specified by the third party.

1   12.   (previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the current system bids each have
2   a second bid price and a second ask price associated therewith, the at least one criterion including
3   at least one of a product category, a product seller, and a spread which is compared with a second
4   difference between the second bid price and the second ask price for each current system bid.

1   13.   (original) The method of claim 1 wherein enabling the third party to facilitate
2   consummation of the transaction comprises enabling the third party to specify at least one
3   business rule for automatically responding to system bids via the wide area network.

1   14.   (original) The method of claim 13 wherein enabling the third party to specify the at least
2   one business rule comprises providing a plurality of criteria to the third party via the wide area
3   network, the at least one business rule corresponding to a subset of the criteria specified by the
4   third party.

1   15.   (original) The method of claim 14 wherein the plurality of criteria includes at least one of
2   a product identifier, a merchant identifier, a number of units being bid, a buyer reputation
3   indicator, and whether an identified merchant has an identified product in stock.

1   16.   (original) The method of claim 13 wherein enabling the third party to specify the at least

2   one business rule comprises providing a plurality of response options to the third party via the

3   wide area network, the at least one business rule corresponding to a subset of the response

4   options specified by the third party.

1   17.   (previously presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the plurality of response options

2   includes at least one of communicate the acceptance and communicate the counteroffer.

1   18.   (original) The method of claim 13 further comprising controlling implementation of the at

2   least one business rule with reference to at least one other business rule associated with the

3   second party.

1   19.   (original) The method of claim 18 wherein controlling implementation of the at least one

2   business rule comprises implementing the at least one other business rule before implementing

3   the at least one business rule.

1   20.   (original) The method of claim 18 wherein controlling implementation of the at least one

2   business rule comprises waiting a predetermined time period before implementing at least one

3   business rule.

1   21.   (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising enabling a fourth party to facilitate

2   consummation of the transaction between the first and second parties in conjunction with the

3   third party via the wide area network.

1   22.   (previously presented) The method of claim 21 wherein enabling the fourth party to

2   facilitate consummation of the transaction comprises enabling the fourth party to cover a

3   remainder portion of the first difference.

1   23.   (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the information includes an identifier

2   identifying the transaction as relating to a product which is part of a mutually exclusive bid group

3   defined by one of the first and second parties.

1 24. (original) The method of claim 23 wherein enabling the third party to facilitate
2 consummation of the transaction comprises enabling the third party to specify at least one
3 business rule for automatically responding to system bids via the wide area network, the at least
4 one business rule relating to the identifier.

1 25. (currently amended) A computer program product for facilitating transactions in a wide
2 area network, comprising:
3   at least one computer readable medium; and
4   computer program instructions stored in the at least one computer readable
5 medium for causing at least one computer to:
6   provide information relating to a transaction between a first party and a second
7 party to a third party via the wide area network, the information including a bid price
8 associated with the first party and an ask price associated with the second party; and
9   enable the third party to dynamically facilitate consummation of the transaction
10 between the first and second parties by transmitting a counteroffer or an acceptance from
11 the third party via the wide area network after receiving the bid price and the ask price,
12 and enabling the third party to cover at least part of a difference between the bid and ask
13 prices,
14 wherein the wide area network is configured to allow any interested entity to participate
15 in the transaction as the third party.

1 26. (currently amended) A method for facilitating transactions in a wide area network,
2 comprising:
3   selectively providing information relating to a plurality of bids on a transaction
4 site to a third party via the wide area network, a first one of the bids involving a first party
5 and a second party, the first bid including a bid price associated with the first party and an
6 ask price associated with the second party;
7   transmitting a response from the third party to one of either the first party or the
8 second party via the wide area network, the response comprising a counteroffer or an
9 acceptance covering at least part of a difference between the bid and ask prices, wherein
10 the third party dynamically facilitates consummation of the transaction after receiving the
11 bid price and the ask price; and

12   notifying the other of the first party or the second party of the response via the

13   wide area network,

14   <u>wherein the wide area network is configured to allow any interested entity to participate</u>

15 <u>in the transaction as the third party.</u>

1   27.   (currently amended) A method for facilitating transactions in a wide area network,

2   comprising:

3   selectively providing information relating to a plurality of bids on a transaction

4   site to a third party via the wide area network, a first one of the bids involving a first party

5   and a second party, the first bid including a bid price associated with the first party and an

6   ask price associated with the second party;

7   transmitting a response from the third party to one of the first party or the second

8   party via the wide area network, the response comprising a counteroffer covering at least

9   part of a difference between the bid price and the ask price, wherein the third party

10   dynamically facilitates consummation of the transaction after receiving the bid price and

11   the ask price; and

12   notifying the other of the first party or the second party of the counteroffer via the

13   wide area network,

14   <u>wherein the wide area network is configured to allow any interested entity to participate</u>

15 <u>in the transaction as the third party.</u>

1   28.   (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the first party

2   of the counteroffer transmitted to the second party via the wide area network.

1   29.   (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising notifying the first party

2   of the acceptance transmitted to the second party via the wide area network.

1   30.   (previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein at least one active object

2   comprises an acceptance button, activation of the acceptance button resulting in transmission of

3   the acceptance to the second party via the wide area network.

1   31.   (previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein at least one active object

2   comprises a counteroffer button, activation of the counteroffer button resulting in transmission of

3   the counteroffer to the second party via the wide area network.